

The Classical Bulletin

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How Plautus and Shakespeare Make Us Laugh

Inest lepos ludusque in hac comoedia,
ridicula res est.

Plautus, prologue to *Asinaria*, 55-56

Life is a serious matter: and men in general, with their eyes fixed on the attainment of some great ideal, and all their efforts seriously applied to it, are so occupied with grave thoughts and important plans that they are not inclined to make any effort to search out the lighter, comical aspects of their daily actions. It is for the comic poet, with a tender and forbearing hand, to lay open to men's view the little follies and caprices that are daily enacted on this great stage of ours. A comic poet is one whose calling it is to provoke to laughter by the artistic portrayal of the ridiculous. Both Plautus and Shakespeare in their comedies so portray the ridiculous, which, within certain limits, never fails to produce its intended result of laughter.

What is laughter? And what is the ridiculous? These two questions we must perforce answer, though ever so briefly and sketchily, in order to get at the vital principle and foundation of the comic art. To begin with, we exclude from our definition of laughter and the comical all ridicule, sarcasm, and satire, as well as any other element that smacks of bitterness, meanness, or spite.¹ Such poisoned weapons are not the arms made use of by true comedy in conquering men's indifference and the cold exterior of their seriousness; nor will they be found in the best productions of our two great classical playwrights.

Laughter, then, is a *nervous reaction caused by the sudden perception of the unexpected in which there is neither pain nor disgust*. Its intensity is determined by the intellectual capacity and sharpness of the individual, as well as by his attention. The less intellectual may be expected to laugh louder and longer, because his mind sees nothing but the bare occurrence or fact which is suddenly presented to it; while the trained and scholarly mind will see other circumstances which may cause him to restrain himself out of consideration for the very subject which excites the less intellectual to manifestations of mirth. Hence the truth of the ancient axiom, "The loud laugh denotes the empty mind." But, on the other hand, the intellectual man frequently sees the hidden glimmer of humor which escapes the stupid yokel, while sometimes for want of simplicity he misses the point. We are justified then in saying that laughter varies considerably with individual minds. Some people laugh heartily under the least provocation; others laugh

but seldom. Not only that, but in individuals too we may find variations.

In the analysis of laughter three things are to be considered as integral parts or contributing factors: the physical thing that causes laughter, the physiological reaction due to the physical stimulus, and the intellectual or mental element that is so apparent in human laughter. Our psychologists speak of the "motor reverberations" and of the "sudden dissipation of accumulated energy."² There is the laugh found in the animal, most markedly in that weirdest of creatures, the laughing hyena of the African jungles, but just as really in the dog, monkey, or parrot. This is the mere appearance of laughter—the external action, evident to the eye and sensible to the ear. There is no mental process required for its manifestation. In man this reaction is the result of the operation of the nerves upon the muscles of the stomach and face, causing the heart to beat faster, the face to flush with the quickened blood-flow, and the contracting of the diaphragm which produces the well-known sound.³ This reaction may take place independently of any concurrence of the mental faculties. As we have said, it is found in animals. It is produced also by tickling. It is seen in infants and in idiots, and it sometimes is manifested during sleep, when the normal mind is not conscious. According to Mr. Sidis, and others, it is the manifestation of the *play instinct* in animals.⁴

Then there is that *risibilitas*, or specific capability of laughter which proves man a creature superior to the animals of the lower order, and furnishes him with the distinctive title of *animal risibile*. This *risibleness*, a *proprium* of man, or quality consequent upon his rationality, is an intellectual thing. It is an action produced at will—though ordinarily in a rather subconscious or automatic way—when the intellect perceives the ludicrous or ridiculous. This kind of laughter does not occur without the presence of its proper intellectual cause or stimulus; there must be a concurrence of pathological, psychological and bodily agents.

What we have thus far said may seem a little vague; but it is generally agreed among psychologists, especially those who have studied the particular branch of the science dealing with laughter, that no one theory can be laid down which will satisfactorily explain this strange, yet perfectly natural, property of man.⁵ The English philosopher Hobbes defines laughter as a *sudden glory* arising from the perception of the base and unworthy in another (but "base" and "unworthy" are here, as throughout this paper, to be understood in the

sense of Aristotle, as "some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive").⁶ This *sudden glory* is, of course, implicit. Kant holds that laughter is caused by a *sudden expectation ending in nothing*; and he also aptly describes it as *konvulsivische Fröhlichkeit*. Schopenhauer, the king of pessimists, thought that *incongruities* were the cause of laughter.⁷ Sidis, in his work on the Psychology of Laughter, speaks of laughter as one of the manifestations of the *play instinct* in men—and animals generally. Father James J. Daly, in his essay on Sir Thomas More, mentions a principle (aptly applied to the life of the admirable English martyr) which he attributes to Coleridge: "There is always in genuine humor an acknowledgement of the hollowness and farce of the world and its disproportions to the god-like within us . . . The essence of humor is a certain reference to the general and universal, by which *the finite is brought into identity with the little, or the little with the finite great, so as to make nothing in comparison with the infinite.*"⁸

Did time allow, we could easily gather more theories. But it appears on closer examination that what we have here are not so many different theories, as rather so many extensions or developments of the two or three cardinal principles. The reduction can be attempted at leisure. The notion of the *sudden glory* seems to bear great weight in circles where the subject is discussed,⁹ and, if proper allowances are made, it seems quite plausible. It is to be borne in mind, of course, that these alleged causes of laughter (each of which is perfectly applicable to the phenomenon) are not conceived as conscious volitional acts; they are to be looked upon as nearly mechanical and reflexive.

"As for comedy," says Aristotle, "it is an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others; the mask, for instance, that excites laughter, is something ugly and distorted without causing pain."¹⁰ The ultimate purpose of comedy is to arouse men, and make them laugh, by a presentation of the ridiculous. The following paragraph from the Psychology of Laughter is well put:

In comedy and laughter there is a letting go of the realities of life; there is present a relaxation from the persistent concentration on the problems which life sets before us; there is relief from the seriousness, irksomeness, and grinding demanded by the authoritative, despotic decrees of the autocracy of the external environment; there is a liberation from the limiting, controlling, regulating social surroundings. We spin and weave airy webs out of severe, inflexible realities, circumvent them, transcend them, play with them and laugh at them. As in a dream, or rather, in a day reverie, we are no longer at the mercy of the external world. We spin the yarn or web of life as fancy and caprice please. In this respect the play of the comic and the life of dream and reverie are alike.¹¹

Mr. Sidis is here speaking of artistic, fanciful comedy, and not so much of farce. If we look at it in this its proper light, the definition of Coleridge seems to stand

forth in a clearer sense. The comparison with the Infinite seems more in evidence from the idea that the audience is made to take an objective view of the actions, and consequently of the nature, of men and of human affairs. *Comedy is contemplation.*

Cicero tells us that "those subjects are most jested upon which are provocative neither of violent aversion nor of extreme compassion."¹² Inferiority, therefore, is the basis of the ludicrous, and the definition of Hobbes holds all the more.

It is said that the appreciation of a joke depends on the audience. "The same joke which sends one audience into convulsions of laughter meets with indifference and even disapprobation from another crowd under different circumstances. Education, race, religion, nationality, industrial and political interests, class and race prejudices must all be taken into consideration."¹³ True enough; but in spite of this there exist such things as *objects of universal laughter*, things which appeal to the sense of humor in every human intellect, which lightly upset the sense of propriety and order that is present in every human mind, and awaken laughter by their very suddenness. Sully enumerates over a dozen of these: novelty, deformity, moral deformity, vices, breaches of order and rule, small misfortunes, obscenity (on this cf. note 17), pretences, want of knowledge or skill, relations, verbal play and amusing witticism, affection, laughable objects which affect us as expressions of a merry mood, laughable situations which involve a relation akin to that of victor and vanquished.¹⁴ These objects of laughter find expression in various ways, such as the following, mentioned by Brill:¹⁵ *lapsus linguae*, or play on words, consisting of a slip or *faux pas*—a device frequently made use of by the Fools in Shakespeare; the clever use of words in strange and significant combinations; the German *Schüttel-rhein* (or Spoonerism)—calling the "busy Dean" a "dizzy bean"; displacement of the psychic accent, as, e.g., a beggar asks for an alms, saying that he is homeless and has no friends; and the miser counters by enlarging upon the dire misfortune of being homeless and penniless, instead of granting his request;¹⁶ repartee; nonsense-wit, representation through the opposite, sense in nonsense, outdoing wit, wit through similarity, and, finally, what is popularly known as the "smutty joke." The "ludicrous" in this is interwoven with sex appeal.¹⁷

With regard to these forms of verbal play and amusing witticism Mr. Sully remarks: "The playful impulse to get as far away as possible from rule and restraint, to turn things topsy turvy, to seize on the extravagant and wildly capricious is clearly recognized here."¹⁸ The devices which are universally employed to excite the risibilities of the crowd, and which will be found in every comedian from Plautus to Molière to Shakespeare to George M. Cohan, may be summed up as follows: *ludicrous characterization*, in which Aristotle's "mistakes and deformities not productive of pain or harm" are enacted; (under this head come the villain, the parasite, the *miles gloriosus*, the fool, the more or less modern "old maid," and an army of other types);

unexpected situations and turns of fortune, always, of course, in the direction of the ridiculous; *mistaken identity*, with its hopeless tangles of comical situations; "the discernment of difficulty and clumsiness where there should be ease and grace in the manifestations of energy and action";¹⁰ relief from a great strain; the mechanical and the stupid (which are portrayed in action rather than in speech: a feature of comedy which we lose completely in the mere reading of a play); suggestiveness; loss of dignity; perception of incongruity; turning on masters; mimicry. To sum up in a paragraph:

It seems able to present to the eye and ear all varieties of the amusing. As a show, it carries on the fun of children's make-believe play. It can set before us the most grotesque aberrations of dress, carriage, and manners. In its human figures, again, it presents to us in forms of its own choosing, the full variety of laughable traits of mind and character. Lastly it can exhibit in its plots the whole gamut of teasing and practical joke, which amuses men in real life.²⁰

One very important aspect of comedy which does not come home to us from mere reading is the pantomime. The actions, the grimace-making, the costume and bearing of the persons in the play, the sounds and expressions of the voice are not easily supplied in the reading. Experience teaches us this, and the advent of the "Talkie" has made some striking revelations. Music also played a large part in comedy. Ancient theatrical presentations relied for a great deal of their vigor and life upon musical accompaniment.

There are, then, certain fixed actions and ideas, so strangely opposed to the common conventions of man, so contrary to his established customs, that they cannot fail to arouse his sense of the ridiculous and to provoke him to manifestations of mirth and amusement. It is left to the genius of the comedian to discover these and to turn them into drama which will appeal to the general audience. Herein lies the secret of his art. The great masters of comedy have felt that theirs is a sacred calling, as when Shakespeare, at the conclusion of one of his wild farces, says through the mouth of his heroine:

and your task shall be,
With all the fierce endeavor of your wit,
To enforce the pained impotent to smile.
(*L. L. V*, ii, 861)

St. Louis, Mo.

JOHN W. LANGE, S. J.

NOTES

- ¹ Sidis, *Psychology of Laughter*, 39 ff.
- ² Maher, *Psychology*, 445; Sidis, *l. c.*, 225.
- ³ Walsh, *Psychotherapy*, 105 ff.
- ⁴ Sidis, *l. c.*, 3, et passim; Sully, *An Essay on Laughter*, 146; Maher, *l. c.*, 439.
- ⁵ Sidis, *l. c.*, 1-2; Sully, *l. c.*, 143.
- ⁶ Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, 5, 5.
- ⁷ Hobbes, *Hum. Nat.* IX, 13: the comment on Hobbes' definition in the *New International Encyclopaedia*, classifying it as "a guffaw of self-conceited triumph over the follies and deficiencies of others," is narrow-minded. Kant, for the first definition, *Kr. d. Urt.* I, 189: for the "convulsive joyousness," *Anthr.* I, 76. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, 84.
- ⁸ Daly S. J., "Sir Thomas More, Saint and Humorist," *Cath. World*, 111, 463.
- ⁹ Maher, *l. c.*, 439 ff.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *l. c.*, 5, 5.¹¹ Sidis, *l. c.*, 79.¹² Cicero, *De Oratore*, II, 58.¹³ Sidis, *l. c.*, 189.¹⁴ Sully, *l. c.*, 87-118; Woodbridge, *The Drama, Its Law and Technique*, Ch. V.¹⁵ Brill, *Fundamental Conceptions of Psychoanalysis*, 113-119; Norwood, *Greek Comedy*, 41, "Main Topics of Middle Comedy."¹⁶ A similar example will be found in Plautus, *Captivi*, 830-900.¹⁷ Brill attempts to explain the intricacies of this form of the "ludicrous," cf. *l. c.* 126 ff.; also: Sully, *l. c.*, 99 ff.¹⁸ Sully, *l. c.*, 347.¹⁹ Sidis, *l. c.*, 19.²⁰ Sully, *l. c.*, 347.

On "The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable" consult the monograph of M. A. Grant (Univ. of Wisc., 1924).

The greatest need of our colleges is good teachers, men who have taken all knowledge as their province and who have a missionary passion for making it as wonderful to others as it is to them. In the ideal college, every course would be a course in philosophy, but in each course the philosophy would be presented from a particular point of view. . . . All teachers in a liberal college should be thinkers. At present most of them are at best intellectual mechanics, slaying knowledge with smug complacency. Knowledge has survived only because it is immortal.—Percy Marks

De Ripio Vinkelio, V

Quodam autem autumnai die, cum caeli tempestas erat praelara, dum Ripius more suo latius vagatur, casu fortuitoque in altissimum Kaskilliorum montium iugum imprudens conscendit, sciuros (id quod in deliciis habebat) venando persequens; ibique vocis imago crepitum ballistae per solitudines silentes saepius rettulerat, cum, sole a meridie multum iam declinante, in viridi tumultu herbis montanis vestito, qui praecipitis rupis summum tenebat, lassitudine anhelans recubuit. Quo ex loco cum in omnem regionem subiectam atque silvas uberes prospectus per complura milia passuum pateret, spatio quodam inter arbores interiecto, Hudsonem, maximum illum fluvium, infra se positum, lento ac tacito cursu praeterfluentem, ac modo imaginem purpureae nubis aquae speculo referentem, modo summo flumine vitro simili tardas lintres passis velis huc illuc vagantes et quasi sopitas sustinentem, ac postremo in loca montuosa sese abdentem, procul conspiciebat. Ex altera parte convallem altam prospectabat, secretam, agrestem asperamque, imminetium scopulorum fragmentis ab imo oppletam et extremis solis occidentis radiis vix illuminatam. Haec omnia ille humi iacens cum tacitus aliquamdiu contemplatus esset, et interea montes, vespera paulatim adventante, longas atrasque umbras per valles proicere coepissent, noctem ipsam diu ante superventuram esse sensit quam in pagum redire posset, et terroribus dominae Vinkeliae sibi obviam eundum esse reputans ex imo pectore suspirat.

Iam descensus erat, cum subito vocem cuiusdam semel atque iterum se clamantis procul audit: ad quem sonitum cum oculis retorsis nihil videret nisi solum corvum trans montes volantem, deceptum se esse inani mentis specie ratus, iterum ad descensum se convertit, cum eandem vocem "Ripium" clamantem per aera silentem percipit: inhorrescere Lupus, et fremitu emissio, pavide in vallem despicens, domino latitans appropinquare. Sensit tum Ripius incerto se metu percute; cumque anxius in illam partem aspexisset, animadvertit mira specie hominem lente ac laboriose per saxa subeuntem et sub sarcina, quam tergo portabat, incurvatum. Ac primo quidem mirari quod quemquam in tam deserto atque avio loco videret; tum, cum ex vicinitate esse suaeque opera egere arbitratus, ut eam illi praestaret, cum festinatione descendit. Omaha, Neb.

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Editorial

Many people, including perhaps not a few educators, must have received something of a shock last November when the Armour Institute of Chicago published its report on the question, "What is wrong with our technical schools?" Some of the leaders in our greatest industries had been complaining that, while the technical schools trained good technicians, they failed to develop in their students a realization that to lead a successful and a happy life one must be a man, a human being, even before being an expert technician. To remedy the deplorable lack of logical thinking often observed in the graduates of technical schools, the report urges compulsory courses in philosophy. English composition is also advised, besides courses in literature, history, and one or two other branches that are deemed necessary for the making of a "full" man. It should, moreover, be brought home to the student that he is to live his life in a world not of mathematical abstractions, but of men and women, and that to do this without friction, he must realize what it means to be a human being with social instincts, human aspirations and human failings.

Now, this lecture is read us by hard-headed business men, from whom we should hardly have expected a panegyric on the humanities. And business men are efficient: so perhaps the humanities are destined to experience a revival. With *America* we hope that they will soon be restored to their rightful place in some of our liberal arts colleges which have all too eagerly sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

"The surge and thunder of the Odyssey," the wrath

of Achilles, Virgil's "ocean-roll of rhythm," the wisdom of Soerates, the reverence of Aeschylus, the restraint and sympathy of Sophocles, Livy's "pictured page," and all the other treasures of our Greek and Roman heritage may, indeed, remain an unknown quantity to our technicians. Still a true understanding of English literature, of history and philosophy—if they are to have thus much—cannot but arouse in course of time a sympathetic attitude also towards the ancient Classics. If the hopes thus raised for a new curriculum in our technical schools come to fruition, then, even though the Classics themselves be absent, the classicist will have genuine cause for rejoicing.

The Latin Subjunctive and Its Problems

Take the subjunctive mood out of Latin grammar and you have taken Hannibal out of the Second Punic War, Satan out of Paradise Lost, and politics out of democracy. The disturbing element would be gone, but no one would know that there had been anything to disturb. If we could ever thoroughly subdue the Latin subjunctive, the salaries of Latin teachers should immediately be cut in half. The present article will have no such fiscal repercussion; it may even stimulate some teachers to ask for a larger monthly check.

It is quite possible that some of us have been struggling along with our teaching of the subjunctive without definitely perceiving the true nature of the various difficulties with which we have to contend. If that be the case, it is scarcely probable that we are meeting the difficulties face to face. Perhaps an analysis of the problem will serve to suggest remedies. There are at least five separate reasons why the subjunctive is a stumbling block:

1. The Latin subjunctive is intrinsically difficult. It is not a simple entity, but combines a number of elements which are not too obviously related. Moreover, some of its uses in classical Latin are decidedly illogical. Why, for instance, should a clause of actual result have its verb in the subjunctive? Why should the subjunctive be used in indirect discourse, in *cum*-clauses, and in various types of substantive clauses? The reason is not clear because many of these uses are the result of analogy, which at times is very far-fetched.

2. English auxiliary verbs, *may*, *should*, *would*, etc., which play an important part in the translation of Latin subjunctives, are in themselves very elusive, and their various meanings are not adequately understood by high-school pupils.

3. True subjunctive forms in English (as distinct from phrases formed by the use of auxiliaries) differ very slightly, when they differ at all, from the indicative forms. Hence the pupil is often not conscious of the presence of a subjunctive idea in the English sentences which are to be translated into Latin, e. g., "If I had the time," "If they were rich," etc. It is not true, as is sometimes said, that the subjunctive has all but disappeared from modern English. Every newspaper is full of subjunctives, but the mood must be identified

through the context, rather than by means of characteristic forms.

4. Undue emphasis is often placed by teachers on the amount of meaning that is carried by Latin subordinating conjunctions. Pupils are taught that *ut* means "in order that" and that it takes the subjunctive. As a matter of fact, *ut* does not mean "in order that." Originally it was an indefinite adverb of manner, meaning "in some way or other." In classical Latin, this meaning was submerged in the functional value of *ut* as a symbol of subordination in certain types of clauses, some of which took the indicative, and some the subjunctive. Again, instead of saying that *ut* sometimes takes the subjunctive, it would be more true to say that a particular type of subjunctive in a particular context requires the presence of *ut*. Hence the situation resolves itself into this: In certain contexts the presence of *ut* with the subjunctive leads us to the concept of purpose. In other contexts, *ut* with another type of subjunctive will call for the concept of result, command, desire, wish, etc. Since however, such formulae as "*ut* means in order that and takes the subjunctive" have become hopelessly imbedded in our teaching of Latin, it would be hazardous to attempt a change. Pupils should be trained, of course, to rely chiefly on context as a means of identifying subordinate clauses.

5. The most unfortunate and the most inexcusable obstacle thrown into the student's path is the fact that many grammars, and no doubt many teachers, tell the student that the subjunctive is equivalent to *may*, *might*, *may have*, etc. The pupil is informed, for instance, that *habeam* means "I may have." The fact of the matter is that *habeam* scarcely ever means "I may have." This equivalent is practically confined to purpose clauses. It is equally untrue to say that *habeam* means "may I have," for this would limit the force of the subjunctive to only one of its functions, the expression of wish. The most sensible attitude taken by any grammar is that of Allen and Greenough. These authors assign no English equivalent at all to subjunctive forms. A footnote carries the explanation: "All translations of the subjunctive are misleading, and hence none is given." In other words the subjunctive must be taught by functions, not by meanings. Meanings are to be assigned only in individual sentences, where the context will decide what precise English equivalents are most suitable.*

Now that we have surveyed, well or ill, the various difficulties that constitute the subjunctive "complex," we are in a position to suggest how each should be handled. The first, fourth, and fifth difficulties enumerated above will be best attacked by an analysis of the functions of the subjunctive. The second will be solved by a compilation of a list of the ordinary meanings of the English auxiliaries. The third problem must be left to the patience of the teacher and the docility and alertness of the pupil.

We shall now briefly discuss the fundamental notions that underlie the Latin subjunctive. Most authorities agree that the subjunctive in Latin, as in other languages, has the following functions:

1. The subjunctive represents an action or state as willed or commanded by someone. This is known as the volitive subjunctive, and its force often differs very little from that of the imperative. The hortatory and the jussive subjunctives obviously belong to this category, but it is found also in the concessive subjunctive, as well as in substantive clauses after verbs of resolving, commanding, requesting, etc. E.g. *Impero ut abeas*, "You are to go away: I command it."

A slight variation of this volitive subjunctive is known as the optative subjunctive, which represents an action or state as wished for. These two functions differ only as willing differs from wishing. Wishing implies the consciousness of inability to insist on the fulfilling of one's desires. These two uses may be grouped together under the title of "Subjunctives of Desire."

2. The subjunctive may represent an action as objectively incumbent on someone, or as proper to be performed. This is the subjunctive of obligation or propriety. An instance of this is found in the so-called deliberative subjunctive: *Quid faciam*, "What am I to do?" By a natural analogy this is extended to the second and third persons and to the past tenses: *Quid faceres*, "What were you to do?" This subjunctive is used in dependent clauses after such verbs and expressions as *restat*, *sequitur*, *dignus est qui*, *neccesse est*, *mereri*, etc., e.g. *neccesse est abeamus*, "We are to go away: it is necessary."

3. The subjunctive may represent an action as anticipated, expected, inevitable, etc. In other words, it expresses future time and differs very little from the future indicative. This close connection between the present subjunctive and the future indicative is clearly seen from passages in Plautus where the future indicative could easily be substituted for the present subjunctive. In fact the older forms of the future indicative in the third and fourth conjugations were actually replaced by subjunctive forms, thus the old *audibo* gave way to *audiam*. This function of the subjunctive is found in result clauses and in temporal clauses introduced by *priusquam* and *dum*. The past tenses of this subjunctive regard future time from a past viewpoint, e.g., *Constituit pugnare dum interficeretur*, "He resolved to fight until he should be killed."

Besides this vivid anticipation of the future, the subjunctive may look ahead in a less vivid or conditioned sense. This usage is observable in the apodosis of conditional sentences of the second and the third types, and also in the so-called potential subjunctive, e.g. *Si hoc dicat, erret*, "If he were to say this, he would be mistaken."

4. None of these three fundamental types of the subjunctive can explain for us the use of that mood in indirect discourse, in indirect questions, in *cum*-clauses, clauses of comparison, etc. In some of these uses the subjunctive seems to have encroached on the domain of the indicative, for these ideas are largely expressed by the indicative in Greek and in other languages. This development is the result of analogy, though sometimes the analogy is not easy to understand, as for instance in

the case of *cum*-clauses. In regard to the subjunctive of indirect discourse, the problem is not entirely hopeless.

If we compare our three types of subjunctive on the one hand with the force of the indicative on the other, we find this outstanding difference. The indicative points to a fact as having taken place, as actually taking place, or as going to take place. (We shall not stop here to discuss the apparent contradiction involved in speaking of a future fact.) The subjunctive, as we have seen, represents an action as desired, as proper, or as more or less vividly anticipated. Such actions are not facts at all; they are only ideas in the mind. Hence the subjunctive has an atmosphere of ideality, of subjectivity, and by reason of this nebulous quality, it can serve as a fitting vehicle for the expression of anything that is entertained by the mind as a mere idea and not as a fact, even though this idea is not the object of desire or anticipation in any true sense. In clauses of comparison like *Ambulat tamquam claudus sit*, the lameness is viewed as a figment of the imagination only. It is not represented as a fact, nor as a thing desired nor anticipated. In indirect discourse we give the views of another without assuming any responsibility for their validity or reality. For us they are ideas only, though in themselves, and from the viewpoint of the person quoted, they may be very real indeed.

In spite of the fact that we have attributed the quality of ideality or subjectivity to all the various types of subjunctive, we cannot seize upon this common factor and make it do service as an adequate explanation of all subjunctive functions. It would be quite absurd to try to explain so dynamic a concept as the jussive subjunctive by saying that the action is represented as purely ideal. Ideality is an emanation of the subjunctive, rather than its essence or even its foundation. Willing, wishing, obligation, propriety, and anticipation may be looked upon as so many differently colored roses in the rather thorny nosegay of the subjunctive. Ideality or subjectivity may be conceived as the aroma that exhales from them all. Sometimes, as in indirect discourse, the aroma is all that occupies our attention.

In explaining the subjunctive as found in indirect discourse, the teacher will do well to make use of some concrete comparison; for example, the idea expressed in such a subjunctive verb may be compared to an object seen in a mirror, to a check that may be cashed at the bank, or even to a baseball with a "curve" on it. The corresponding thought expressed by the indicative will then be the object directly perceived, a twenty-dollar gold piece, or a "straight" ball thrown across the center of the plate. Such illustrations will make it clear to the pupil that this subjunctive does not represent an idea as objectively unreal, but merely as indirectly expressed.

We have, then, four types of subjunctive under which may be grouped practically all the various functions that fill page after page in the grammar. Let us name these types as follows: Subjunctives of Desire, of Obligation, of Expectation, and of Indirect Discourse. The pupil should bear in mind that any main verb whose

meaning can be classed under desire or obligation will very likely require its dependent verb to be in the subjunctive. However he had better equip himself with a list of the more common exceptions, such as *iubeo*, *volo*, etc. Again he should remember that when an idea is represented as belonging to another's viewpoint, or as anticipated by the subject of the main verb, it will probably call for the subjunctive.

This fourfold functional attitude toward the subjunctive will not solve the problem entirely, though it may be of some help. All that can be said for it is that it will take the pupil out of the pathless woods and set him down in an open field with the four corners clearly marked, but without any fences to keep him from going astray if he does not keep his eyes open.

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NOTE

*For purposes of comprehension, if not for elegant translation, the most satisfactory English equivalent for the Latin subjunctive is a phrase formed by means of the verb 'to be,' e.g., "I am to go, you are to go, he was to go," etc. This phrase is capable of expressing command, obligation, propriety, and anticipation, and as we shall see, these are among the most important functions of the Latin subjunctive. The subjunctive in indirect discourse should usually be translated by an English indicative.

Papyrus and Ancient Letters

The visitor to the Missouri Botanical Garden may doubtless see among the aquatics *Cyperus Papyrus* with tufted crown, lending in living green an elegant grace to its surroundings. The plant is delightfully illustrated in some of the oldest of Egyptian reliefs—in one, for example, of a bird-hunt in a papyrus-swamp.¹ A species of water-grass growing to a man's height and more, it has a pithy, triangular stem sometimes as thick as an arm. The Egyptians had numberless ways of putting it to use, in woven articles, as food; but its destination *par excellence* was as carrier of the written word. It is arresting to realize that our Western world's treasury of ancient letters, sacred and profane, has come down to us—directly to our parchment manuscripts and thus to our printed books—on rolls or pages fashioned of thin, vertical sections of papyrus stems.

So wide a generalization invites appropriate reserves. The Old Testament in its original tongue was from remote antiquity transmitted by preference on skins. The same material may have been used among the Greeks until their commerce with Egypt, the land of the papyrus, came to be frequent. That would be from the middle of the seventh century, when Psammetichus I opened his realm to the Greeks.² Herodotus refers expressly to the transition in writing materials, still reflected in his time by the use of the old word *διφθέρα* for the new *βύβλος* (V, 58). A momentous category of ancient texts, the inscriptions, has come to us on stone. But when all deductions have been made, the fact remains that the written thought of the Mediterranean world to and through the period of classical Latinity, was largely launched or long forwarded over the centuries to posterity on papyrus leaves.

Doubtless parchment (skin, both sides of which are

dressed for writing) was no post-Classical invention. Pliny's story refers its introduction to Eumenes II of Pergamum, 197-158 B. C.³ Fragments of it have been found, from the early Roman period in Assyria; from the Hellenistic, at Doura on the Euphrates.⁴ And the parchment treasures of our libraries—at the Vatican, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the British Museum—what of them? They are old compared with our printed books; for the great bulk of classical literature they are the oldest surviving witnesses; but they are centuries younger than the text they carry. Take the case of the Greek classical authors. With the exception of Homer, our manuscripts of them are subsequent to the Patriarch Photius (IXth century).

These parchments, it is true, had parchment ancestors. But the parchment pedigree for literary works does not seem to have mounted earlier than the nascent Christian era. When in the long run the parchment codex (a book with pages) displaced the papyrus roll, this development seems itself to have been in no small measure due to the preference accorded the newer format in Christian usage. This preference, in its turn, may well have attached in the first instance to the comparative inexpensiveness of the codex, for which parchment was a better material than papyrus. Sir Edward Maunde Thompson sums up the transition thus:

It was particularly the influence of the Christian Church that eventually carried vellum into the front rank of writing materials and in the end displaced papyrus. As papyrus had been the principal material for receiving the thoughts of the pagan world, vellum was to be the great medium for conveying to mankind the literature of the new religion.⁵

Vellum—parchment—was in fact to be the vehicle of pagan and Christian literature alike, when the papyrus books, whether rolls or codices, that had once carried the Gospels, as they had carried the classics of Athens and of Rome, should have been discarded. Even so, outside the specific field of book-production, the importance of papyrus as a writing-material diminished little. Having traced the expansion of its use, at an earlier epoch, in Hellenistic lands, Schubart continues:

In the Imperial period, papyrus is also for Italy and the Western half of the Roman Empire, the veritable writing paper. . . . Its victorious competitor was to be [not parchment but] the rag-paper (*Haderpapier*) introduced to the Mediterranean world by the Arabs.⁶

One of the most striking of Egyptian sculptures at the Louvre is *Le Scribe accroupi*. In painted limestone he sits, tailor-fashion, with a lap-board on his thighs. His left hand retains the scroll; his deft right hand, the pen—that should have been a rush cut to a point; his wide-open eyes gaze right before him: they, and his narrow lips express intense alertness. He has been so for more than four thousand years (the work is dated to the Fifth Dynasty), waiting—I let myself fancy—for the next syllable to fall from the lips of a magistrate dictating a serious matter. The poised intensity of the scribe's soul, so remarkably rendered, wins our sympathy.

Papyri far older than the statue are preserved to us. Thompson, on Petrie's authority, dates a roll containing royal accounts to the middle of the fourth millennium before the Christian era.⁷ A judicial decision in hieratic script, not far from the age of the Louvre Scribe, is now in the collection of the Neues Museum, Berlin. (P. 9010. Sixth Dynasty: *circ.* 2540-2360 B. C.). An eldest son, it appears, had challenged the alleged will of his deceased father. Sebekhotp, whom the disputed document empowered to administer the estate for life, is to be sustained—so runs the papyrus—provided he brings forward three reliable witnesses to the genuineness of the testament. Otherwise the eldest son is to enter into possession.⁸

Is all this remote and far away from the world of the classicist's predilection? It at least enables us to see something of the early history of a material element that was to be very significant in that world. Its use continued, we have observed, long after the classical period was over. In 1929, at the instance of Pius XI, Pope and Librarian, the trustees of the Vatican Library published a magnificent volume in large folio: *Pontificum Romanorum Diplomata Papyracea quae supersunt in Tabulariis Hispaniae, Italiae, Germaniae, phototypice expressa* . . . Some of the documents in this collection date as late as 1000 A. D. Doubtless papyrus was then already rare. An ancient and distinguished form of writing-material, it found in the papal chancellery a post of honor at the end of its days. For four thousand years and more it had lent its precious aid to the service of the written word.

That section of its history which most concerns classical and eventually Christian interest—from the Hellenic to the Arabic conquest of Egypt—has come to constitute a science in itself. Papyrology is in the nature of things a subsidiary science: its function is to serve larger disciplines: but there is little of interest in the field of Western cultural antiquities on which it has not shed lucid rays.

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NOTES

¹ Shown in Schubart's *Das Buch bei den Griechen und Römern*. Berlin 1921. P. 4.

² A. Moret, *Le Nil et la Civilisation Egyptienne*. Paris 1926. Pp. 402-3.

³ *Nat. Hist.* xiii, 11.

⁴ P. Jouguet, *L'Impérialisme Macédonien et l'Hellénisation de l'Orient*. Paris 1926. P. 274.

⁵ *Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography*. Oxford 1912. P. 30.

⁶ *Einführung in die Papyrskunde*. Berlin 1918. P. 36.

⁷ *l. c.* P. 21.

⁸ *Die Papyri als Zeugen antiker Kultur*. Berlin 1925. P. 33.

"Teaching the Gallic War as Caesar Wrote It"

1. In the title of my article on colometry in the January issue of the BULLETIN, the word "wrote" may have confused some of my readers. It may have seemed to imply that Caesar and other Latin prose writers actually used sense-lines when they put their narrative into writing. We have no grounds for affirm-

ing that such was the case. "Composed" would have been a better word; for in saying "as Caesar wrote it," I referred to his thought-processes, not to his manner of putting his thoughts on paper. This point, I hope, was made clear in the body of the article.

2. One critic writes: "'For the practical purposes of high school' let me recommend the system of parentheses, brackets, and braces . . . in place of writing on different levels. Unless you wish to kill time, in class or at home, don't ask the boys to rewrite their chapters of Caesar. Outside of being good penmanship practice, it's not economical." I cannot agree. Full lines and block pages are sufficiently confusing to the average pupil, without the further complication of added markings, particularly of three varieties. The simple mark of a diagonal bar might be used, as in fact it is used by Miss Spilman in her article which I recommended in the January issue. For the most part she omits punctuation, except the period at the end of a sentence. For an illustration of the arrangement, see note 7.

But even the diagonal bar arrangement does not give that full and *important* visual aid which separate sense-lines can and do give. The eye precedes the understanding in reading. Short, separate sense-lines aid the eye, and therefore the understanding, in the quickest, most efficient way. As a matter of fact, the history of colometry shows that they were used originally for the very purpose of aiding more intelligent reading. With the help colometry gives to the eye, and with repeated readings of a colometrized passage, the sense of that passage is more deeply impressed on the understanding and *memory*. Mark the word "memory"—it means that repetitions will be less and less the dread things they often are. Assuredly the process of colometry takes time and thought. What worth-while process does not, especially in the beginning? The Romans could have spent less time in road-building; but if they had, there would be none of their roads in use today. The time spent on the separate sense-line method is time well spent; it will, before long, begin to repay both pupil and teacher at a high rate of interest.

3. In view of another critic's opinion that my rules were somewhat obscure by their very explicitness, I restate them here, reducing their number from four to three and making use of a more graphic arrangement.

- (1) **Indent:** *dependent clauses*; e. g., conditional, temporal, causal, adversative, relative.

N. B. Do not indent:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. <i>Participial modifiers</i> | } for these are integral parts of the main clause. |
| b. <i>Substantive clauses</i> | |
| c. <i>Accus.-w.-infin. constructions</i> | |
| d. Short, unemphatic <i>relative clauses</i> , especially of the restrictive type. | |

- (2) **Indent** (if important enough to receive separate sense-lines):

- | |
|---|
| a. <i>Ablatives absolute</i> |
| b. <i>Appositional clauses and phrases</i> |
| c. <i>Parenthetical clauses and phrases</i> |

- (3) **Introductory particles, words, and phrases**, when

separated from the main clause by a dependent clause, are placed on the line occupied by the dependent clause but are not indented.

4. I have been asked: "Was indention used in ancient colometry, or is it a feature introduced by you?" As far as prose is concerned, we cannot tell. Indention was used in poetry, but the poetical colon differed from the prose colon. There is not room here to discuss the matter of poetry and colometry. Indention seemed to me an advantage in the way I explained in my article. Any modern system of sense-lines is necessarily subjective in the details of arrangement, and the method I used is my own, as far as I know. It is the privilege of the teacher to use any method that best suits him and his class. Although indention is admittedly an advantage, it may be postponed until the pupils have acquired the "feeling" for dividing a passage correctly into sense-lines. Since, however, most students know the words that introduce dependent clauses, it would not be impossible to use indention from the first.

5. Colometry is a distinct aid in vocal as well as in silent reading. The art of vocal reading can scarcely be said to flourish among us at the present time. It should be cultivated in the Latin no less than in the English class, and sense-lines can aid in raising the standard of performance considerably.

6. To give a showing to Cicero as well as to Caesar, a colometrization of the first chapter of the *First Catilinarian* will soon be published. It will be found that Cicero's greater use of structure and rhetoric stands out clearly and to advantage through the very use of sense-lines.

7. In these notes, I have discussed three colometrical arrangements: the use of diagonal bars, of sense-lines with indention, and of sense-lines without indention. To provide an objective and impartial comparison, I subjoin a sentence from Caesar (B. G., II, 11) arranged according to each of the three methods.

Ea re constituta / secunda vigilia magno cum strepitu ac tumultu / castris egressi nullo certo ordine neque imperio / cum sibi quisque primum itineris locum peteret / et domum pervenire properaret / fecerunt ut consimilis fugae profectio videretur.

Ea re constituta,
secunda vigilia magno cum strepitu ac tumultu
castris egressi nullo certo ordine neque imperio,
cum sibi quisque primum itineris locum peteret
et domum pervenire properaret,
fecerunt ut consimilis fugae profectio videretur.

Ea re constituta,
secunda vigilia magno cum strepitu ac tumultu
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et domum pervenire properaret,
fecerunt ut consimilis fugae profectio videretur.

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Literature can do without exact scholarship, or any scholarship at all, though it may impoverish itself thereby; but scholarship cannot do without literature.—
Woodrow Wilson

